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SPEECHES ON GERMANY

WITH A

FOREWORD

by

SIR AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

K.G., P.C., M.P.

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NOTICE

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INTRODUCTION.

Sir Austen Chamberlain has been a member of the House of Commons since 1892 and has held many high ministerial offices, including that of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1924—1929.

Officially, Germany will always recognise the important part he took in the negotiations which terminated in the Pact of Locarno and in Germany's entry as a Great Power into the League of Nations. When in 1925, for this signal service, Sir Austen was created a Knight of the Garter, he had behind him the applause not only of his colleagues in the House of Commons, but of his fellow countrymen.—For the British nation wanted to believe that the Germany of Stresemann was seeking to contribute its share to an age of constructive co-operation and of peace.

The Germany of Stresemann has yielded to the Germany of Hitler. Germany has of her own choice left the League. No greater shock has, since 1919, been administered to British opinion and to the harmonious conduct of international affairs. After Locarno Sir Austen was unwearied in promoting international confidence and co-operation with Germany as an equal in the League of Nations.

This confidence has been sorely shaken. It was fitting that the Foreign Secretary of Locarno fame should express, from his place in the House of Commons, the true feeling of the British nation upon Hitler's Germany of 1933.

FOREWORD

In consenting to the republication at this time of the following passages taken from speeches made by me in the House of Commons several months ago, it is perhaps right that I should add a few words about what has passed in the interval.

In the earlier one I uttered a warning against the peril to world peace implicit in the recent development of German policy. In the second I endeavoured to show Germans why and how that policy impeded and indeed, as long as it lasted, must prevent the realisation of German hopes. The significance of both lay not in the personality of the speaker but in the immediate response which his words evoked from the public both at home and abroad.

Has anything occurred since April to make the warning less opportune? Have later developments provided the assurances which I sought in July?

It is true that we have had from high German authority reiterated declarations of a desire for peace—provided that it is a German peace. But the provocations and menaces to Germany's weaker neighbours continue and the daily broadcast, the cinema, the schools and universities are all made instruments of a propaganda which belies these fair words and robs them of the meaning we would fain attach to them. Finally Germany announces her withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference and from the

League of Nations for reasons (to quote Mr. Henderson) "which I am unable to regard as valid" at the very moment when the Bureau was about to submit to the Conference a programme "for the realisation of equality of rights which the German Government have always placed in the forefront of their demands" (Mr. Henderson's reply to Baron von Neurath, October 16th).

Were these demands sincerely meant? Did Germany in fact desire to achieve security by disarmament or was the real object to find an excuse for a rearmament which in due time would enable the German Government once more to use war as an instrument of policy and to repeat the crime of 1914?

These are questions which other nations must answer. To express a doubt of the wisdom of this policy in Germany itself is a crime to be followed by immediate arrest; to vote against it or even to refrain from voting for it is to be proclaimed in advance a "traitor". (See "The Times" of October 24th.)

These speeches, alas! have not yet been rendered out of date.

AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.

October 25th, 1933.

1. Extract from a Speech in the House of Commons, April 13th, 1933.

"Is this the time to talk of revision, with what has been happening in Germany before our eyes? A good deal is made in Germany of some sensational propaganda and exaggerations which are said to have appeared in other countries. I dare say such have appeared in this or in other countries, but I do not base my case on that. I have not myself read it, because that is not the kind of paper from which I seek to get information. I have not read it and I do not base anything that I say upon it, but I have read the very restrained accounts of some very responsible correspondents, and I have noted that the "Manchester Guardian" is not considered a fit paper for the Germans to have access to. I do not, however, base my observations upon what I have read even in serious and responsible papers, written by men who carefully sift the information they send home and whose reputations depend upon its impartiality and its accuracy. I base my case upon the statements of Germans in authority; I do not need to go outside them.

"What is this new spirit of German nationalism? The worst of the old-Prussian Imperialism, with an added savagery, a racial pride, an exclusiveness which cannot allow to any subject not of 'pure Nordic birth' equality of rights and citizenship within the nation to which he belongs. Are you going to discuss revision with a Government like that? Are you going to discuss with such a Government the Polish Corridor? The Polish Corridor is inhabited by Poles; do you dare to put another Pole under the heel of such a Government?

"After all, we stand for something in this country. Our traditions count for our own people, for Europe, and for the world. Europe is menaced and Germany

is afflicted by this narrow, exclusive, aggressive spirit, by which it is a crime to be in favour of peace and a crime to be a Jew. That is not a Germany to which we can afford to make concessions. That is not a Germany to which Europe can afford to give equality.

"I understood that the promise made by the Five Powers was of equality of status, to be reached by stages. Before you can afford to disarm or to urge others to disarm, you must see a Germany whose mind is turned to peace, who will use her equality of status to secure her own safety but not to menace the safety of others; a Germany which has learnt not only how to live herself but how to let others live inside her and beside her."

2. Extract from a Speech in the House of Commons, July 5th, 1933.

"I suppose it is natural to an old Foreign Secretary to speak with great reserve and caution about the internal affairs of another country. One may so easily utter noble sentiments at the cost of somebody else. Denmark might perhaps never have been involved in a war over the Duchies had not British statesmen used words of generous sympathy which were interpreted as a promise of support. We have always to remember in these matters that we are dealing with other people's affairs, and we must be careful not to do more harm than good, but I think it is safe to say (and it is not a sentiment on one side of the House only) that it is difficult for this country to be on really friendly terms with a nation which banishes from its policy the ideas which are fundamental to all British parties. Members of the Jewish community, or members of any other religious body, may be guilty of excesses or of treason. But can we be really friendly with a nation which proscribes, on racial grounds, a race within its own borders, and refuses to treat its own citizens as equals and fellows?

Is it possible, if Germany desires our co-operation and our help, that she should expect to receive it while she outrages every sentiment implanted in our breasts by the whole course of our history—those sentiments which are common to every party, and which, whatever our differences, unite us in moments of crisis and danger? It is difficult to deal as a really cordial friend with a nation which pursues an internal policy so hateful to those of our tradition. If I repeat myself, it is because the spirit shown within Germany to Germans is a menace to every nation beyond her borders, and to any other race over which she might ever succeed in establishing her domination.

* * *

"I feel strongly on this matter. Perhaps it is because, for four or five very busy and responsible years I worked my hardest, and, as I thought at the time, not without some measure of success, to bring Germany back as an equal into the comity of nations, to end the bickering and pin-pricking which she had no doubt suffered ever since the war, to put our relations on a friendly and even a confidential footing, and to go forward with old friends and new friends to build a better future for our country and the world. I see all these hopes, if not destroyed, adjourned, delayed, postponed, by this new spirit which is prevailing in Germany. It is not only the internal aspect, it is not only the internal events in which the new spirit finds expression. Locarno stood, for a time at any rate, as a symbol of peace and reconciliation, but in the new Germany the name of Stresemann has no respect; Locarno is a word of abuse.

* * *

"Is there any part of the Peace Treaty which the new Germany accepts? What of those speeches about Schleswig, where the Danes very wisely refused to receive any part of their own territory back again except by the choice of the people who inhabited it,

and had restored to them a territory in which a plebiscite showed, I think, 75 per cent. voting in favour of reunion with Denmark? That is no more sacred than the Corridor or Silesia.

"If Germany wants revision of the Treaties, if Germany wants disarmament, she has got to convince the world of two things. She has got to convince the world that a reasonable adjustment of the Treaties will satisfy and end the question. Whether you read the story of the 20 or 30 years which preceded the War, or whether you read the story of the post-War years, you will find the same thing. While something is refused to Germany, it is vital. If you say, 'Well, we will give it to you, and now our relations will, of course, be on a satisfactory footing,' it loses all value from the moment that she obtains it, and it is used by her merely as a stepping-off place for a further demand. Until Germany shows that there is a moderate, reasonable and acceptable readjustment of the Peace Treaties which would be final, and would be treated as final by her, no man serves the interests of peace if he allows the Germans to suppose for one moment that any revision is possible.

* * *

"I come now to the same thing with disarmament. You can have no solution of the world's difficulties, economic, political or otherwise, until there is a will to peace in the world. That is profoundly true. Disarmament—physical disarmament—only becomes possible when there has been that measure of moral disarmament which makes nations feel that physical disarmament is safe. As long as every speech made in Germany, as long as every bit of their propaganda, is menacing, inflammatory, biased and one-sided, how can they expect that those whom by this propaganda they menace should disarm in order that Germany may be in a better position to attack them? If Germany would revert to an earlier mood; if she

would show a real desire to fulfil, a real intention to observe, her obligations ; if she would cease to menace her neighbours, she would then reassure the world that, in asking for the disarmament of those who have not disarmed, she was seeking her own security and not simply trying to reach again a position in which she would be able to challenge and break the peace of the world.

"I am not sorry that the Disarmament Conference is adjourned. The moment was not propitious for its progress and, for my part, I beg the House of Commons, and I beg our Government, to beware how they take the responsibility of pressing other nations, nearer to the point of peril than ourselves, to lessen their armaments, until at least we can be assured that we do not endanger their safety, and thereby place upon ourselves and our own people a moral obligation, greater than any written obligation, to go to their assistance if they are attacked.

* * *

"The measure of the concession which can be made, in this matter or in any of the other matters with which we are concerned, depends not upon us but upon Germany herself, and she must realise that by these inflammatory incitements to her own people—a people which, only the other day, was plunged in misery and despair, and is now in an almost hysterical state of excitement and jubilation—she delays the accomplishment of her wishes, and, still more, by the menaces which those excited people proffer to her neighbours, she makes it impossible for a nation as detached as we are from the immediate struggles of the Continent to give her the assistance and aid which, if her people were in a happier mood and her Government were more wisely and prudently conducted, it would be our pleasure to render."